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Cat. A - Caption removed; transferred to O/FADRC
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Z 090134Z AUG 70
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 8094
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA FLASH

S E C R E T MONTEVIDEO 1641

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CORRECT TEXT WORDING THROUGHOUT PER ORIGINATOR)

BOGOTA FOR MEYER

REF: STATE'S 128611 AND 128604 AND MONTEVIDEO'S 1635

SUBJECT: MITRIONE KIDNAPPING - MEETING AT FOREIGN MINISTRY

1. TULL AND I SPENT HALF AN HOUR WITH FONMIN PEIRANO FACIO AND SUBMIN RICALDONI BETWEEN 1900 AND 2000 (AUGUST 8).

2. I BRIEFLY REVIEWED CURRENT SITUATION AND EXPRESSED GROWING CONCERN OVER NOW CRITICAL POSITION OF MITRIONE AND INCREASINGLY PRECARIOUS SECURITY OF EMBASSY PERSONNEL. I THEN HANDED HIM A LIST OF FOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION.

A. APPEAL PUBLICLY TO THOSE FEW WHO ARE HOLDING MITRIONE--FOR SAFE DELIVERY MITRIONE OFFER THEM AMNESTY OR AMNESTY PLUS AN AWARD (5 MILLION PESOS).

B. OFFER AMNESTY TO KEY PERSONS NOW BEING HELD IN RETURN FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO RELEASE OF THE THREE MEN.

C. REPEAT (AND REPEAT) OFFER OF REWARD FOR INFORMATION.

D. IF INFORMATION HAS BEEN RECEIVED AND THE MILLION PESOS PAID--THANK THE PERSON (NOT IDENTIFIED) PUBLICLY AND URGE

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OTHERS TO COME FORTH WITH MORE INFORMATION. FON MIN COMMENTED DURING DISCUSSION OF MITRIONE HE PRESUMED WE WERE ALSO TALKING OF FLY AND I SAID OF COURSE WE WERE.

3. [redacted] AGREED THAT SO FAR AS KIDNAPPED VICTIMS CONCERNED, SITUATION HAD WORSENED. GOU HAD HEARD TWO RUMORS REGARDING THIS DANGER: (1) FIRST, THAT ALL THREE VICTIMS WOULD BE KILLED TONIGHT; (2) SECOND, THAT ACCORDING TO MLN NOTE NUMBER 9 MITRIONE WOULD BE EXECUTED AT NOON TOMORROW. AS FOR THE FIRST IT WAS ONLY A RUMOR, BUT ON THE SECOND, THE GOU HAS BEEN FORCED TO CONCLUDE THAT THIS COMMUNICATIONS IS AN AUTHENTIC MESSAGE FROM GROUP NOW HOLDING MITRIONE. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE DIFFERENCES IN STYLE AND PRESENTATION IN LATEST MLN NOTE, THIS HE THOUGHT WAS EXPLAINABLE IN TERMS OF CONFUSION IN TUPAMARO RANKS AND POSSIBLE LOSS OF EQUIPMENT AFTER YESTERDAY'S ARRESTS. 1.3(a) 5

4. [redacted] SAID GOU IS NOW ASKING JUDGE FOR AUTHORITY TO UTILIZE SODIUM PENTATHOL ON MLN PRISONERS AND HAS REQUESTED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM BUENOS AIRES. ALSO, INTERIOR MINISTRY WOULD SHORTLY ISSUE COMMUNIQUE SAYING IT INTENDED TO UNDERTAKE MOST EXTREME POLICE MEASURES TO LOCATE KIDNAP VICTIMS. 1.3(a) 5

5. AS TO MY SUGGESTION RE PUBLIC OFFER OF AMNESTY AND REWARD, FONMIN THOUGHT IDEOLOGY OF MLN WOULD MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THOSE NOW HOLDING THE VICTIMS TO RESPOND TO SUCH PUBLIC OFFER AND THEREBY BE SEEN BY ALL AS BETRAYING THEIR IMPRISONED COMRADES. TO BE IN ANY WAY EFFECTIVE, GOU WAS CONVINCED THAT REWARD/AMNESTY COMBINATION WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE PRIVATELY. HE SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS FULLY WITH PRESIDENT DURING DAY-LONG MEETINGS TODAY AND WANTED TO SUGGEST TO ME THAT THE USG RPT USG ITSELF UNDERTAKE SECRET RANSOM EFFORT DIRECTLY WITH MLN. HE DECLARED THAT CHANNELS COULD BE FOUND--THEN SAID WITH EMPHASIS THAT I SHOULD SEE [redacted] IMMEDIATELY [redacted] SAID THAT IF WE WERE TO UNDERTAKE SUCH AN EFFORT AND PAY A RANSOM, GOU WOULD REIMBURSE USG FOR WHATEVER NECESSARY AMOUNT. HE STRESSED THAT GOU HAD NO OBJECTION, IN FACT THOUGH IT MIGHT BE EFFECTIVE WAY TO SECURE RELEASE, IF WE WERE PRIVATELY TO OFFER RANSOM OURSELVES. I REPLIED THAT I UNDERSTOOD CLEARLY WHAT HE WAS SAYING, BUT I STRONGLY FELT SUCH EFFORT WAS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY OF GOU, THAT URUGUAY ITSELF SHOULD 1.3(a) 5 [redacted]

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MAKE THIS EFFORT. SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY, PEIRANO IMMEDIATELY AGREED AND THROUGHOUT REMAINDER OF CONVERSATION DID NOT REPEAT IDEA OF USG/MLN BILATERAL APPROACH. ON SUBJECT OF AMNESTY, FONMIN SAID THIS WOULD BE INCLUDED IN OFFER. BUT HE EMPHASIZED SEVERAL TIMES THAT RANSOM/AMNESTY APPROACH WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE DONE BY URUGUAYAN GOVT BUT RATHER BY "OTHER PEOPLE", THROUGH PRIVATE CHANNELS. I TOOK THIS TO MEAN THAT [redacted] KNOWS GROUP OF URUGUAYANS WHO ARE WILLING TO ACT IN PRIVATE CAPACITY IN THIS MATTER, THUS AVOID INVOLVING GOVT DIRECTLY IN IT. 1.3(a)5

6. NEXT, I ELABORATED UPON THE EMBASSY'S PROTECTION PROBLEM (POINT NUMBER 5 REFTEL 1635). I HANDED PEIRANO LIST OF OUR ADDITIONAL NEEDS WHICH INCLUDE GUARD PROTECTION FOR 60 HOUSES IN CARRASCO, 44 APARTMENTS IN POCITOS AND PUNTA CARRETA, AND SEVERAL OFFICES (LIBRARY, ALIANZA AND PEACE CORPS). I SAID I RECOGNIZED DIFFICULTY GOU MIGHT HAVE IN PROVIDING THIS QUANTITY OF GUARDS AND THEREFORE WAS ALREADY CONSIDERING ALTERNATE MEASURES TO SOLVE MY SECURITY PROBLEM. THE LONGER MITRIONE AND FLY ARE HELD, THE MORE PRECARIOUS I FELT SECURITY SITUATION WOULD BECOME AND IF MITRIONE WERE KILLED, THAT SITUATION WOULD DETERIORATE FASTER. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, I WOULD PROBABLY RECOMMEND TO WASHINGTON WITHDRAWAL OF A NUMBER OF MY PERSONNEL. I SAID I RALIZED THIS WOULD QUCKLY BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND CREATE IMPRESSION IN US AND IN URUGUAY THAT SECURITY SITUATION WAS DETERIORATING. I WOULD BE SORRY FOR THOSE RESULTS BUT I HAD MY JOB TO DO IN PROTECTING MY STAFF.

7. FINALLY, I REFERRED AGAIN TO SUBJECT OF REACTION TO MITRIONE'S MURDER IF IT APPEARED TO PUBLIC THAT GOU HAD MADE NO EFFORT TO COMMUNICATE WITH TUPAMAROS. [redacted] REPLIED THAT HE REALIZED RISK OF PUBLIC REACTION, BUT THAT SUCH THINGS COULD NOT BE DONE EFFECTIVELY IN PUBLIC. HE SAID HE WANTED TO ASSURE ME THAT CONTACTS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED BUT THAT THEY COULD NOT BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OR THEY WOULD LOSE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS. HE CLOSED BY ASSURING ME WITH GREAT VIGOR THAT THE GOU WAS NOW TAKING EVERY POSSIBLE STEP TO AVOID A TRAGEDY. 1.3(a)5

8. AT 2045 HOURS LOCAL TIME, ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES AFTER I HAD RETURNED TO CHANCERY, PEIRANO PHONED ME AND SAID HE WANTED TO LET ME KNOW THAT MATTER WE HAD JUST DISCUSSED WAS NOW UNDER WAY. HE SAID HIS GROUP HAD INITIATED CONTACT WITH "THE PERSON I REFERRED YOU TO THE OTHER DAY" [redacted] 1.3(a)5

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[redacted] HE SAID NO SPECIFIC SUMS OF MONEY HAD AS YET BEEN MENTIONED, BUT HE WANTED ME TO KNOW THAT HE HAD TAKEN IMMEDIATE ACTION FOLLOWING OUR CONVERSATION. I THANKED HIM FOR CALLING AND SAID I THOUGHT WE SHOULD GET TOGETHER AT MID- MORNING TOMORROW, TO WHICH FONMIN READILY AGREED. 1.3(a) 5

9. WITH REFERENCE TO OFFER REWARD FOR RETURN OF KIDNAP VICTIMS, DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE THAT OFFER BEING MADE THROUGH PRIVATE CHANNELS MENTIONS NO PARTICULAR SUM OF MONEY. I CAN FORSEE POSSIBILITY OF REQUEST FOR SUM WHICH GOU MIGHT CONSIDER EXCESSIVE. I PRESUME DEPARTMENT HAS EXAMINED QUESTION OF MONEY REWARDS AND MAY HAVE DEVELOPED A POLICY ON THIS SUBJECT. AS IT IS CONCEIVABLE GOU OR PRIVATE CONTACT (UNKNOWN TO US) WHO NOW DEALING WITH SUBJECT MAY BEFORE NOON TOMORROW APPROACH US FOR PARTICIPATION IN FUNDING THE OPERATION, I WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT GUIDANCE FOR RESPONSE.
ADAIR

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